

# Romantic Mystery of the Princess Riabouschinsky

Is This Beautiful Daughter of a Poor Italian

Professor, Freed at Last from Her Russian Husband, About to Take Her Place as Queen of the Famous Goelet Millions and Name—Just Like Some Heroine of Fiction?



The Beautiful Elsie Whelen Goelet—Mrs. "Bobby" Goelet No. 1—Who Found "Maintaining the Goelet Pride" Too Burdensome.

WHEN Mr. Robert Wilson Goelet—multi-millionaire, outstanding figure among kings of finance, once called "the richest bachelor in the world," and former husband of the beautiful Elsie Whelen Goelet, of Philadelphia—sailed on the last voyage of the Aquitania, did he go abroad to add the final chapter to what has become known to the fashionable society in America and Europe as the romantic mystery of the Princess Riabouschinsky?

In other words did Mr. Goelet sail to make, at last, this beautiful and sprightly Italo-Russian the lawful successor to the first Mrs. Goelet, who, by the way, is now Mrs. Henry Clews, Jr.?

Mr. Goelet, when asked point blank whether he was

going to wed Mme. or the Princess after he reached Paris said:

"Wouldn't it be better to ask the lady about it instead of asking me?" And when it was objected that she was a little too far away to be interviewed at this moment, Mr. Goelet smilingly said: "Well, I can't prevent you from saying anything you please about it."

Fashionable society in New York and Newport are positive that it is Mr. Goelet's intention to confer his name on that wondrously beautiful and most puzzling of ladies, who is now in Paris glorying in the possession of a freshly won divorce.

The romance between the multi-millionaire, who by birth is as powerful in the aristocratic circles of the United States as he is in the circles of high finance throughout the world, has for many months been one of the most interesting and fascinating problems of that same fashionable society.

There are so many apparent obstacles to the marriage that society cannot for the life of it see how it can possibly take place and yet, knowing the indomitable character of Mr. Goelet, society is equally sure that if he really wants to marry the lady nothing can stop him.

The Princess, or Madame Riabouschinsky, is the daughter of Professor Rocchi, of the University of Perugia. There is considerable doubt about the title with which her blond-bearded Russian husband is said to have endowed her. Her first name is Fernanda. Certainly Madame or Princess or "The Riabouschinsky" as Newport calls her, while not belonging to American exclusive circles, has all the fire and beauty of her race. To these, by several years association with her husband's people, she added much of the curious philosophy and mysticism of the real Russian. Those who have come in contact with the fascinating foreigner are enthusiastic as to the charm and magnetism produced by this blending of Italian warmth and Russian cold. "Fire and ice," Mr. Goelet is said to have described her the day he first met her, and this very well expresses the lady.

This curious and novel blending of fire and ice, however, fashionable society, at least, asserts, does not seem to be just the best matrimonial mixture for a Goelet, and especially for the son of the Ogden Goelets. There are few women in New

York more difficult to please than Mrs. Goelet in the matter of a daughter-in-law. Indeed, when her only son and heir to the \$35,000,000 of the Goelets fell in love with Elsie Whelen, the famous Philadelphia beauty, Mrs. Goelet did her best to break up the match.

Miss Whelen had family and social position far and away ahead in Philadelphia of Mrs. Goelet's own, but she lacked a fortune, and this was a frightful drawback in the eyes of the mother-in-law to be. However, Robert Goelet had his way then, as always, and he married the girl he adored. But his mother never forgave her, not even when she presented her with two handsome grandsons. Later, when young Mrs. Goelet got a divorce and married Mr. Henry Clews, Jr., Mrs. Goelet disliked her more than ever! Human nature is a queer thing.

And the former Mrs. Goelet openly said that the whole reason for the break between herself and "Bobbie" was too much mother-in-law.

"I am tired of the constant thought of the Goelet name and the way to maintain the Goelet pride," the bride is said to have replied when her then husband urged her to stop thinking of the divorce.

Considering Mrs. Goelet's bitterness toward her first perfectly suitable daughter-in-law, her feeling toward her possible second one can be imagined! Madame Riabouschinsky is called the most beautiful woman in Europe. During the past three years she has been the most talked-of woman in New York. Mr. Goelet has frequently described his first meeting with the lady he is expected to make his wife. It was during the second year of the war when Paris was dark and cold and on the verge of going hungry. Goelet was there on some business connected with the French Ambulance Service. James Hazen Hyde was also there. Hyde made it a point to gather several of his friends together every night or so in his big studio, and, of course, Goelet was included among the lucky ones.

Another Charming Photograph of the Princess Riabouschinsky, Whom, Fashionable Society Believes, Mr. Goelet Has Gone to Join and to Wed in Paris.

One night Hyde took Goelet aside and said something like this: "Bobby, my boy, there's a new beauty coming here to-night; she's just back from the Riviera and she's the most gorgeous beauty in all Europe. I want you to be nice to her."

Just before midnight the lady arrived. Afterward Goelet is quoted as saying he did not know what she had on except that it was yellow and black and green and glittered like a cat's eyes in the dark. And it was also very slithery and made him think of a slender snake in the Bronx Zoo. In plain English, Goelet was bowled over completely. He attached himself to the lady and became so nice to her that before long even war-time Paris was agog with interest.

Paris, you see, knew of the lady's husband. He was a typical Russian of the middle class who was in France on some work connected with the war, and his wife had immediately made a dazzling sensation. She was incorporated in Hyde's pet circle and the world was beginning to forget that she had a real live husband.

When Mr. Goelet returned to America he is reported by Newport gossip as having been madly, deeply, abysmally in love with the lady—but she was apparently cold to his ardor. The Russian husband had been a bit unpleasant toward the last. Paris did hear that he had even threatened a duel, but this was considered too silly to be believed. At all events, Mr. Goelet returned to his own land and the Riabouschinskys stayed on in Paris.

A few months before the United States went into the war, Princess, that is, Mme. Riabouschinsky, arrived in New York and took up her residence in an exquisite little apartment in the Park avenue sector. Friend husband was not in evidence. She explained his absence by saying that he

had gone back to Russia for a few months, but would follow her when he had wound up his Russian affairs.

The air was speedily filled with all sorts of rumors. The two most persistent were that Riabouschinsky himself had turned Bolshevik and his wife had fled to America to escape being made a Bolshevik wife. The second was that she had already secured a divorce, and was but awaiting the proper moment to marry Mr. Goelet. Both of these rumors eventually proved untrue.

The husband turned up and proved to be a mild-mannered although weirdly whiskered chap who seemed as indifferent to his wife's charms as he was to her friendships.

Society was in a terrible quandary. Should it or should it not call upon the lady? That was the question. A few of Mr. Goelet's good friends—he has a great many—took her up and even invited her to small dinners and luncheons. And it must be confessed that even those who did not entertain her made her and her doings a topic of steady conversation. Her clothes were always the sensation of the hour, and her limousine was the most perfectly appointed seen on the Avenue.

Society, even those who entertained Mme. Riabouschinsky, said that Mr. Goelet would never marry her, and how could he, anyway, because of her husband? Then this most mysterious person disappeared from sight, and the last heard of him he was headed for his native country. Gossip reached torrid heat, and again society said Goelet would and would not.

As might be supposed, these were parlor times under Mrs. Ogden Goelet's roof-tree! For months that estimable lady ignored her son's infatuation, but when he began taking his two boys, her grandsons Ogden and Peter, to lunch and drive with Mme. Riabouschinsky, she declared war at

once. The only thing that brought temporary peace was Mr. Goelet's being sent overseas in the army. He made frequent trips back, however, for his job was in the transportation section, and whenever he was in New York he made it a point to send Ogden and Peter to spend the day with the lady of his dreams.

Then shortly after the armistice Madame Riabouschinsky went to Paris; again rumor had it that she had gone to Russia to get a Bolshevik divorce, but "they order this matter better in France," and it was in Paris that she secured her divorce. When this news was cabled to New York, gossip that had somewhat died down during her absence started up again, and now society is divided into two camps—those who will receive her if Goelet marries her and those who will not. Needless to say, the greater number are in the latter camp! Mrs. Goelet, Senior, is a very powerful person—her daughter is the Duchess of Roxburgh, and her sisters are Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., and Lady Herbert, of London.

Without the backing of his women, no man—not even a Goelet—can do very much socially, so if Mr. Goelet, as is rumored, winds up his journey by marrying the lady it is doubtful if he will bring her to New York or Newport very soon.

Then there are his two sons. It is well known that Mrs. Clews, their mother, has been perfectly willing to leave them with their father so long as he remained unmarried, or possibly if he should marry a woman of his own circle. But Mrs. Clews has sent word that the minute her former husband marries Madame Riabouschinsky the boys are to be sent to her. This contingency adds to society's interest in this strange and unusual romance.

Robert Goelet is independent in every

way. His fortune is one of the greatest in this country; he has a splendid town house and a superb country estate near Goshen, N. Y. He can marry where he chooses and lose nothing but social prestige and the friendship of many of his peers. At the moment he is in a mental state where he counts the world well lost for love, and with all that he does possess, why worry about the loss of his friends?

Mr. Goelet was not born yesterday; he knows there are any number of men and women, too, who will be glad to flutter about him, even should he marry so as to displease a lot of staid dowagers.

The "most beautiful woman of Europe" has nothing to lose, but everything to gain, by a marriage with Goelet. The wealth of a Croesus will be hers to command. Already orders have been given for a palatial steam yacht, and her jewels are already famous. To count up the things any wife of Robert Goelet would possess would be overwhelming. To "The Riabouschinsky" their possession would mean all the joys and delights of this world.

How far away are the days of her girlhood when she was the simple daughter of a learned but very poor professor of the University of Perugia, Italy! Verily, she has come far since those days!

Mrs. Goelet, Senior, is in Newport at her magnificent marble villa, Ochre Court; her sister, Lady Herbert, is with her, and very tragic are their days. What to them is this modern sentimental journey? A tragedy of tragedies, perhaps. They, too, know that "Journeys end in lovers' meetings" and they are very angry and very unhappy. It is a foregone conclusion that Madame Riabouschinsky under any name will never tread the stately white stairway leading to Ochre Court, nor wear a single one of Mrs. Goelet's jewels.



The Princess Riabouschinsky in One of the Charming Gowns with Which She Fascinated Fashionable Society of New York and Newport.

To the Left Nicholas Riabouschinsky, Princess, or Mme. Riabouschinsky's Divorced Husband.

